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Diligence in Study: Recommended to Miniſters.

IN A

SERMON,

Preached at the

ORDINATION

Of the REVEREND

Mr. RICHARD RIST,

In *Harlow, Eſſex.*

December 15, 1756.

Publiſhed at the Requeſt of the Church.

By JOHN BRINE.

LONDON:

Printed for and Sold by JOHN WARD, at the King's Arms, againſt the Royal Exchange; by GEORGE KEITH, in Grace-church-ſtreet; and by JOHN EYNON, Printſeller the Corner of Caſtle Alley, by the Royal Exchange.

MDCCLVII.

[Price Six Pence.]

BRITISH MUSEUM

1 TIM. IV. 15, 16.

Meditate on theſe things, give thyſelf wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed to thyſelf, and to thy doctrine, continue in them, in doing this thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them that hear thee.

IT being allotted to me, to addreſs you my honoured and beloved Brother, on this very ſolemn Occaſion of your Inveſtiture with the Office of a Paſtor, or Overſeer, to this Church of Chriſt. I ſhall do it, in an Attempt to explain the Words, which I have now read.

The Apoſtle, before the Text, gives to *Timothy* various important Exhortations, and Directions, relating unto his miniſterial Function: Which I ſhall not take into particular Conſideration; but will immediately apply myſelf, to the Explication of the ſeve-

ral Branches of the Words, in that Order, wherein they ſtand.

I. The Apoſtle exhorts *Timothy* to ſerious and cloſe Meditation. *Meditate on theſe things.* Diligent ſtudy is the indiſpenſible Duty of a Miniſter of the Goſpel. That, my Brother give me Leave, to recommend, and ſtir you up unto, as what is abſolutely neceſſary, for the proper Diſcharge of thoſe Services, which belong to your Station in the Church. Without a due Attention to it, your Diſcourſes will be *crude* and *indigeſted*, and, therefore, not well ſuited to the great End, of improving the Saints, in Chriſtian Knowledge and Experience. The Subjects of your aſſiduous Meditations muſt eſpecially be, the holy Scriptures, and the glorious Truths, which they contain. The Word of God ought to be carefully and diligently read, and meditated upon by all; but Miniſters, in an *eſpecial* Manner, are obliged unto a diligent Peruſal of it. *Give Attendance to Reading, to Exhortation, to Doctrine.* Read the Writings of good Men, wherewith, in the kind Providence of God, the Church is bleſſed, which under a divine Influence will be helpful and inſtructive to you; but above all, *ſearch the Scriptures*, which are *profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Inſtruction in Righteouſneſs, that* you *may be perfect, and thoroughly furniſhed to all good Works.*

You

You muſt carefully conſider the ſeveral Parts of ſacred Writ, and *compare ſpiritual Things with ſpiritual*, whereby, through the gracious Aſſiſtance of the holy Spirit, you will gain a clear and comprehenſive View of the Harmony of the Whole, and a full convincing Evidence of its divine Authority.

Be diligent in enquiring into the proper Meaning of every Text, which you ſhall at any Time undertake to explain and treat upon. Content not yourſelf, as ſome Preachers do, with expreſſing what is true, though it be not the *genuine* Senſe of the Words, which are the Subject of their Diſcourſes. Labour to find out the *real* Import of that Portion of the good Word of God, which you make Choice of, for the Subject of your Sermons. And, alſo ſee to it, that you produce proper and pertinent Teſtimonies, for the Confirmation and Illuſtration of thoſe Truths, which you apprehend are contained in your Text †. Some Preachers ſeem

† That which I here intend might be illuſtrated by the divine Reaſoning of the inſpired Writer to the *Hebrews* in various Inſtances. How clear and full are the Proofs which he produces, to evince the Dignity of the Perſon of Chriſt, as incluſive of both his Natures, divine and human, in the firſt Chapter of that moſt admirable Epiſtle? In what a convincing Manner does he prove, that Chriſt is a Prieſt, and a Prieſt not after the Order of *Aaron*; but of another, quite diſtinct from it? And with what Perſpicuity does he prove,

to be at very little Pains, in either Reſpect, now mentioned, and, therefore, their Performances, are far from being judicious.

And it is very requiſite, that you ſhould meditate much on the Doctrines which are contained in the holy Scriptures. If you do not, you cannot reaſonably hope to diſcern their admirable Variety, adorable Depth, ſtrict Connection, mutual Dependence, and beautiful Harmony, nor, in what Reſpects, ſome evangelical Truths, agree with others, and wherein they differ. This is your proper Buſineſs, as a Miniſter, and it is that painful Labour, which claims your conſtant Attendance. For,

II. You are required, to *give yourſelf wholly unto this Employ. Give thyſelf wholly to*

prove, that the *Sinai*-Covenant was to wax old and vaniſh away? Alſo, that Chriſt is the Mediator of another, and better Covenant? And that, therefore, the *Sinai*-Covenant was not intended, *really*, but only, *typically*, to take away Sin? And, conſequently, that the Pardon of Sin, and Salvation from it, could not be expected, by the Obſervance of any, or all the Rites, which were inſtituted, in that Covenant. Theſe and other Inſtances, in that Epiſtle, are moſt excellent Directions, how we are to demonſtrate and confirm evangelical Truths. When I conſider the Scope of the divine Writer therein, and the Manner of his treating on the many important Subjects, upon which he diſcourſes, I cannot but think it is exceedingly ſtrange, that any ſhould object to an argumentative Way of Preaching in order to confirm the Truths of the Goſpel. Some ſo do, it may be, out of Supineneſs, and Indifferency about ſacred Truths; and others, perhaps, from a Conſciouſneſs, that they are not furniſhed with proper Talents, for ſuch a *demonſtrative* Way of Preaching.

to them. Or, as the Words may be read: *Be thou in them* (εν τουτοις ισθι). Your Heart ought to be fixed on them, and your Thoughts exerciſed about them, *moſt intently*, and *generally* alſo. Not *occaſionally* and *curſorily*; but *conſtantly*, and *cloſely*. This is the nobleſt Employ, wherein our intellectual Powers can poſſibly be engaged.

And it juſtly demands the Whole of your Time. Do not think it is ſufficient, if you now and then devote a few Hours unto this ſacred and important Labour, in order to prepare for your Services, in the Pulpit. But fill up your Time with Contemplations on the glorious Truths of the Goſpel, even when you are not ſoon to be engaged in the Work of Preaching. Miniſters are not, without Neceſſity, to be *entangled with ſecular Affairs*, to their Interruption in an Attendance unto what is of far greater Moment. And, therefore, it is the Ordination of Chriſt, that thoſe, *who preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel.* The End of this Appointment is not, that they may be ſlothful, and waſte their precious Moments in doing Nothing, or worſe than Nothing. It is that they may be devoted entirely, unto that honourable Service, to which he has called them, with a gracious View, to the Inſtruction and Edification of the Church.

My honoured Brother, do not loiter away the Beginning of the Week in trifling Re-

creations,

creations, or in needleſs and unprofitable Viſits, and think it is enough, at the latter End of it, to prepare for your public Services. Begin to ſtudy on the *Monday*, and continue to do ſo throughout the Week.

Some Perſons in this ſacred Function, of an extraordinary Genius, and who have had a Taſte for polite Learning, it is to be feared have been under a Temptation, to neglect their more neceſſary and important Studies, unto their own Prejudice, and the Diſadvantage of the Church, by the alluring Pleaſures which their ingenious Minds have found in Studies of another Nature. Not that I think it is unlawful or unprofitable, for a Miniſter, ſomewhat to gratify his Inclination in that Way. But as Miniſters are not to be entangled in the Affairs of the World, unto their Hinderance in a neceſſary Study of divine Things: So they ought not to ſpend too much of their Time in the Study of the liberal Arts. For, they are called chiefly to attend to what is far more noble, ſublime, and important. Except, my Brother, you thus devote yourſelf, unto theſe divine Studies, you cannot juſtly expect to improve in an Acquaintance with evangelical Truths, which ought to be your Deſire and Aim. As it follows,

III. *That thy Profiting may appear to all.* Endeavour to give convincing Evidence to all

all Sorts of Perſons, of your Growth and Proficiency in divine Knowledge. To the Friends, and alſo unto the Adverſaries of Truth. In the Church of God there are different Claſſes of Chriſtians, viz. *Fathers, young Men, and Children.* Such who are *Fathers*, are ſaid to *have known him, that is, from the Beginning.* Their Judgment and Experience are much advanced, and, therefore, unleſs you treat of *the deep Things of God*, and in a judicious Manner, your Profiting will not appear to them. Diſcourſes which are crude, and indigeſted, though the Matter of them may be true, can never gain their Approbation. Others of leſs Underſtanding, in ſpiritual Things, may approve thereof, but they cannot. For, they expect ſpiritual Demonſtration of ſpiritual Things. Bare Aſſertions of evangelical Doctrines, without a clear ſtating of them, and offering pertinent Teſtimonies for their Proof and Illuſtration, will not be pleaſing to them. *Injudicious* Preaching cannot be acceptable to *judicious* Hearers. It is true, that the Number of ſuch Hearers is very ſmall; but that is not a juſt Reaſon, why we ſhould content ourſelves with treating of the ſublime Truths of the Goſpel, in a *ſuperficial*, and unworkman-like Manner. Let it be your Deſire, and laudable Ambition, to give Satisfaction in the Courſe of your Miniſtry,

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unto the moſt improved, in Chriſtian Knowledge and Experience, by the Depth, Solidity, Pertinence, and Clearneſs of your Compoſures, on thoſe important and glorious Truths, which you are commiſſioned to preach. Good Judgment, much Care and Diligence, you will find neceſſary unto this End, and, therefore, be not remiſs and negligent; but be painful and laborious in Study.

Again, your Proficiency ſhould appear to *young Men*. That is to Chriſtians, who *are ſtrong, and have overcome the wicked one*. You muſt in order to this, conſider well, the Nature, and Variety of Satan's Temptations, upon different Occaſions, and under different Circumſtances. What numerous Wiles and Stratagems he makes uſe of to ſtir up Luſt, to entice to Evil, and to interrupt the Exerciſe of Grace, unto the great Perplexity, and Grief of the Soul. And you muſt ſhew how the gracious Principle oppoſes and reſiſts this Adverſary, by the Guidance and Influence of the Holy Spirit. What are the Reliefs he adminiſters, in Seaſons of Temptation, to the Joy of the Soul, and the Increaſe of the ſpiritual Part. You will find, that this Branch of your Work, requires a careful Review of thoſe Temptations, which you, yourſelf, have been attended withal, and the Workings of your

your Mind, under them: As well as a juſt Obſervation of the Experience of other Chriſtians.

Farther, you muſt alſo aim that your Profiting may appear to *Children*. Chriſt hath *Babes* in His Family and *Lambs* in His Fold. It is your Duty to feed and nouriſh them, as well as more knowing and experienced Chriſtians. Then you will *give a Portion of Meat to every one in due Seaſon*. A Miniſter ſhould deſcend to the Experience of the *weakeſt* Saint in framing his Diſcourſes, that he may comfort, and bring him forward, in heavenly knowledge. This requires much *Tenderneſs, Care and ſpiritual Skill*. Without a proper Conſideration, of, what are the genuine Actings of Grace, under Convictions of Sin, and the Temptations, which uſually attend the Soul, upon a Senſe of Guilt, being impreſſed on the Mind, together, with thoſe Fears, which are often, thereby produced, you will not be well qualified to aſſiſt and comfort the weak Saints, in their diſtreſſing Perplexities, concerning their Pardon and Salvation, about which, this Claſs of Chriſtians, are often Times, very ſolicitous. Be careful, in treating on Faith, that you do not ſtumble theſe *Weaklings*, in Chriſt's Family, by the Manner of your expreſſing yourſelf. Conſider that Faith in all, is not *ſtrong*, that in ſome it is *weak*. Its Nature, and the Kind of its

Actings, are the ſame in all, and it reſpects always the ſame Objects, and is productive of the ſame Fruits; but it does not act with equal Vigor in all, nor in the ſame Perſon at different Times.

Once more, let your Proficiency be manifeſt unto the Adverſaries of Truth. Miniſters *are ſet for the Defence of the Goſpel.* And, therefore, they ſhould endeavour to obviate thoſe Objections, which are raiſed againſt it, by erroneous Perſons, and to confirm its glorious Truths, with clear and ſolid Arguments, drawn from the Word of God that the *Mouths of Gainſayers may be ſtopped.* Some are Enemies to Revelation itſelf, and employ all their Wit to banter and run it down. Theſe *Infidels* we muſt labour to ſilence, by ſhewing, that, what they object to the Holy Scriptures, is *fallacious*, *groundleſs*, or *abſurd*, and, therefore, by no Means concluſive. And, we ſhould labour to prove, that our Belief of Divine Revelation, is built upon *rational* and *juſt* Evidence, which is not attended with any Difficulty; For, that Evidence is as clear, as the Sun, in itſelf, though not diſcerned, perhaps, by ſome, through a Want of due Attention to it, or by the powerful Influence, of *unreaſonable and ſtrong Prejudices*, which they have contracted. Thus, my Brother, your Aim and your Endeavour ought to be, to give Proof to all Sorts of Perſons, that you

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are a *good* Proficient in Divine Knowledge. May the Lord aſſiſt you, conſcientiouſly to uſe thoſe Means, which he hath appointed to that End; and may his Bleſſing be upon you therein!

And this your Proficiency ſhould be *in all Things* (εν πασιν), in every Branch of your Work, as a Miniſter. And, therefore, it is neceſſary, that you ſhould thoroughly ſtudy every Doctrine, *legal* and *evangelical*. All Cautions, Exhortations, Precepts, Reproofs, and comforting Promiſes, that you may be *apt to teach*, and that you may be *a Son of Thunder*, to the ſtupid and careleſs, *and a Son of Conſolation*, unto the Mourners *in Zion*.

IV. *Take Heed to thyſelf.* This Branch of Advice reſpects you as a Man, a Chriſtian, and a Miniſter. You ſhould take Heed to yourſelf, as a Man. Though Miniſters are called to Self-denial, that they may ſerve the Church of Chriſt, and preach His Goſpel, it is lawful for them, prudently to conſult their own Welfare, and the Good of their Families, that they may be ſupplied, with the Neceſſaries of Life. And this is a Duty encumbent on them, in common with other Men. Take a prudent Care of your Health, to preſerve it, that you may continue capable of attending to thoſe laborious Services, which belong to your Station, in the Church. It is of greater Im-

portance to take Heed to yourſelf, as a Chriſtian. Be careful of your *ſpiritual Welfare*. While you aim at the Edification of others, neglect not your own, if you do, it will be attended with ſorrowful Effects. For, *Leanneſs* of Soul will be the Conſequence of ſuch Neglect. Conſider this *awful* Truth, that you may profit others, and not yourſelf, by your miniſterial Services. Spiritual Advantage can no otherwiſe accrue to our Souls, by the Doctrines we preach, than in *mixing Faith* with them. And, therefore, it is very neceſſary, that we ſhould deſign acting our Graces, in the Exerciſe of our Gifts—Without that, though our Abilities may be improved, our renewed Part, will decline in its Vigor—Grace will not *thrive* in our Hearts, unleſs it is *frequently* acted on thoſe precious Truths, which we are commiſſioned to preach. Remember, my Brother, that in this Senſe, you muſt be mindful of your *own Vineyard. You can't be too much ſo.* It is a melancholy Thing to feed others, and *ſtarve* our own Souls, through Negligence in this Matter, which, perhaps, may have been too much the Caſe, at leaſt, *with ſome of us.* May *the good Lord* convince us of, and humble us for our Sin, and Folly herein! It is not enough, to pleaſe, and even to do Good to others, by our miniſterial Labours, if we ourſelves receive no ſpiritual Benefit by them. We ought

ought to obſerve with what Frame of Mind, we ſtudy and preach. Whether we think and ſpeak of the great Things of God, with that holy Reverence, which they juſtly demand. They are adorable in their Nature, and, therefore, we ought to contemplate on, and expreſs them with great Seriouſneſs and Awe. Evangelical Myſteries ſhould be ſtudied, and treated of in the moſt reverential Manner, becauſe of the Divine Glory which there is in them, above all other Subjects whatſoever. A due Conſideration thereof, will tend to engenerate and promote in you, a becoming Frame of Soul, when you are converſant about them, in your Study, and in the Pulpit.

Again, take Heed to yourſelf, as a Miniſter. Neglect not; but *ſtir up the Gift*, that is in you. Be diligent in the Uſe of all thoſe Means, which God hath appointed, for the Cultivation, and Improvement of it. If you are not, how can you hope for its Increaſe, or even for the Continuance of it, with you, in any tolerable Degree? If we are negligent and ſlothful, we can't reaſonably, have any Expectation of increaſing our Furniture, for the Service and Benefit of the Church. And be cautious how you conduct yourſelf, in Converſation, and in thoſe Viſits, which you pay your Friends. Chriſtians are of very different Tempers, and ſometimes it falls

falls out that they have different Intereſts, and are at Variance. And, therefore, great Prudence, is neceſſary in converſing with them, in ſuch a Circumſtance. Without it, you may do much Injury. Let *the Wiſdom of the Serpent, and the Innocency of the Dove*, be united, in whatever you expreſs, on ſuch Occaſions. Sometimes, Silence may be beſt. Very often, a *ſilent* Tongue, is an Evidence of a *wiſe* Head. I ſay it again, very often, a *ſilent* Tongue is an Evidence of a *wiſe* Head, in a Miniſter, whoſe Office leads him to converſe with Chriſtians, among whom, through one Cauſe or another, Differences ariſe in this State of Imperfection. If you cannot heal Breaches, be ſure not to *widen* them, through a Want of Caution, in what you at any Time, ſay, to either of the Parties, at Difference.

V. You muſt, my Brother, *take Heed to your Doctrine.* Well conſider and examine, what you deliver in the Name of God, to his People. See to it that thoſe Principles, which you advance and inculcate, agree with the Holy Scriptures. Permit me to mention five *infallible* Rules, whereby all Doctrines, may be tried, and their Truth, or Falſehood, determined, viz. *Doctrines which are calculated, to promote the Glory of Divine Grace: Which exclude Boaſting in the Creature: Which are a Foundation of Strong Conſolation,*

ſolation, in the Saints: Which are according to Godlineſs: And which are conſiſtent. I call them *infallible* Rules, becauſe they are *moſt plainly ſcriptural.*

1. The firſt Rule, whereby, I would adviſe you to try Doctrines, is this: If they are *calculated to promote the Glory of Divine Grace.* By Grace, I do not mean the Benevolence and Bounty of God, as the Creator, and Upholder of all Things, which are of univerſal Extent. *God is good to all, and His tender Mercies are over all His Works.* Wherein, He acts according to that infinite Goodneſs, which is natural to Him. Some ſeem to have no other Conception of Divine Favour, which is the Cauſe of Salvation, than that it is, this univerſal Good Will of God, as Creator, whereof all Creatures, are the Objects in their Creation-State, which is as great a Miſtake, as can be, on this momentous Subject. Divine Love, which is the Origin of our Salvation, is the ſovereign Pleaſure and Good Will of God. There is a *Fitneſs* in the Exerciſe of Goodneſs towards all Creatures, as they were formed by their Almighty Creator; but God does not provide for the Recovery of guilty Creatures, becauſe it is fit, in *itſelf*, that He ſhould ſo do: Or, becauſe it is agreeable to Goodneſs, as it is *natural* to Him. If this was the Fact, then God would not be at Liberty to ſave, or not ſave Sinners,

Sinners; but making Proviſion for their Salvation, would be *neceſſary* to Deity. For, all Acts of Goodneſs, as it is *natural* to God, are *neceſſary*, and not *free* Acts of His Will, though His Will acts *freely*, in determining to put forth ſuch Acts of Goodneſs. Divine Grace to which our Salvation is owing, is abſolutely free Favour, which acts without any Inducement, or Motive, in its Objects. If we conſider the Temper and Conduct of the Subjects of Salvation, *naturally*, we muſt be convinced of the Truth of this, I think. *Are they not under the Dominion of Sin? Is not that the governing Principle in them? Are not their carnal Minds Enmity againſt God? Are not their Minds alienated from the Life of God?* And as to their Conduct: *Have they not their Converſation, according to the Luſts of the Fleſh, fulfilling the Deſires of the Fleſh, and of the Mind? Are they not fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived, ſerving divers Luſts and Pleaſures, living in Malice, and Envy, hateful, and hating one another?* What can there be, in ſuch, to invite the merciful and kind Regard of God to them? Men in order to diſprove, the *abſolute* Freedom of Divine Favour, in the Affair of our Salvation, are obliged, to riſe up in *flat* Contradiction, to this *diſpleaſing* Repreſentation, of the Diſpoſition of our Minds, and of our Conduct, in our natural State. And to maintain, that in Fact, we

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are not ſo corrupt, in our Hearts, nor ſo criminal in our Behaviour, as the Scripture repreſents us. *By Grace we are ſaved* (a). *The Kindneſs and Love of God our Saviour towards Man appeared, not by Works of Righteouſneſs, which we have done; but of His Mercy hath He ſaved us* (b). *It is of Faith, that it might be by Grace* (c). Our Salvation is *entirely* and *abſolutely* of the Grace of God, without any Works of ours. The Admiſſion of them, as concurring Cauſes, with the Grace of God, deſtroys its true Nature. For, *if it be of Works, then it is no more Grace* (d). The Deſign of God, in our Recovery, is to magnify the Riches of His Grace: My Brother, try all Doctrines by this Rule, it is an infallible one. And, therefore, you may be aſſured, that whatever Principle, is not calculated to promote the Glory of Divine Grace, it cannot be true, by whom ſoever it is embraced or advanced. Let it, therefore, never have Place in your Preaching.

2. The ſecond Rule for your Tryal of Doctrines, is this; They muſt be ſuch, as exclude Boaſting. *Where is Boaſting then? It is excluded? By what Law, of Works? Nay, but by the Law of Faith* (e). *Not of Works leſt any Man ſhould boaſt* (f). Boaſt-

(a) *Eph.* ii. 8. (b) *Tit.* iii. 5. (c) *Rom.* iv. 16.
(d) chap. xi. 6. (e) *Rom.* iii. 27. (f) *Eph.* ii. 9.

ing is *abſolute*, or *comparative*. *Abſolute* Boaſting, is this: A Man's affirming, or inſiſting on it, that he has in the Courſe of his Life, performed the Whole of his Duty, and in ſuch a Manner, as the Law requires, and, that, therefore, he has a Right to Life, according to that Law, which is the Rule of Action to him. This *Kind* of Boaſting cannot have Place, in any, who acknowledge, that they are Sinners, and ſtand in Need of Salvation. And, therefore, it is not that which the Apoſtle contends, is not to be admitted, in the Affair of Salvation.

Comparative Boaſting *only* can be intended, which is this: An Opinion, that by a proper and wiſe Improvement of thoſe Means, which are afforded us, to that End, we have ſecured to ourſelves Life and Happineſs, which ſome others, have fooliſhly neglected to do, and, therefore, periſh. In the apprehenſion of many, the Fact ſtands thus, with Men, in the Buſineſs of Salvation. God is pleaſed in infinite Benevolence and Goodneſs, to make Propoſals of Pardon and Peace to them, and affords them, ſuch Helps and Advantages, as are ſufficient, if they are not wanting to themſelves, to enable them to obtain theſe Bleſſings. Some act the *wiſe*, and others the *fooliſh* Part, in the Enjoyment of thoſe Helps and Advantages, and, therefore, the Event is different, according to their different Behaviour, in the

ſame advantageous Circumſtances. For Inſtance, *Peter* and *Judas*, through Divine Clemency and Mercy, are favoured with Overtures of Pardon and Salvation, and both have Aſſiſtances of the ſame Kind, to facilitate obtaining thoſe Bleſſings, yea, which are ſufficient to that End, if wiſely improved by both. *Peter* he is ſo prudent, as to conſult his own Welfare, and makes the beſt Uſe of thoſe Helps, and Advantages, and, thereby, obtains the great Bleſſings, which God, in his infinite Mercy offers, and promiſes to beſtow, upon ſuch a wiſe and prudent Behaviour. On the Contrary, *Judas* he is fooliſhly regardleſs of his eternal Peace, and neglects to improve thoſe Aids and Aſſiſtances, which God mercifully grants him, whereby, he alſo might obtain Life and Happineſs, and, therefore, he miſſes of the Bleſſings, which are offered and promiſed, to be given, upon a different Behaviour. Now, if this is the true State of the Caſe, *Peter* hath proper Ground for a *comparative* Boaſting, or the ſame Reaſon, for paying himſelf a Compliment, and applauding his own Wiſdom, as *Judas* hath for Cenſuring himſelf and condemning his own Folly. Becauſe, each had the *ſame gracious* Tenders, and the *ſame Kind Helps*, and, therefore, the Welfare of *Peter* is owing to his own Wiſdom and Care, as the Deſtruction of *Judas* is the Effect of his own Folly, or Neglect. For, *Peter* was not de-

termined, by Divine Influence, to act, as he has done; but his Determination, to act the *wiſe* Part, he hath acted, followed, upon a *rational* Conſideration of the *Fitneſs* and *Wiſdom* of ſo acting. And it was poſſible, for *Judas*, to have determined, to act in the very ſame Manner, and, thereby, to have obtained the very ſame Benefits, as *Peter* hath acquired a Right unto. This is that *Boaſting*, which is excluded in our Salvation, and, which it is impoſſible, that any ſhould have Foundation for. Becauſe, the *Whole* of our Holineſs, in *Principle*, and *Acts* is from God, as the efficient Cauſe thereof. And if he intends to ſave you, he will certainly bring you to this humble and grateful Acknowledgement, that you *are nothing*, and that it is: *By His Grace, you are what you are.* Allow me, my Brother, to preſs it upon you, to try your Doctrine by this Rule, which is ſo plainly laid down in Scripture, and be ſure to reject every Principle which agrees not with it.

3. The third Rule for your Tryal of Doctrines is: *If they are a proper Foundation, for ſtrong Conſolation in the Saints.* It is the Will of God, that Believers ſhould enjoy *ſuch Conſolation* (g). And, therefore, Sentiments which are not ſuited to produce and maintain it in them, cannot be true, by whom ſoever they are embraced, and propagated. Their Peace and Comfort

(g) Heb. vi. 18.

fort, ſpring from, and are founded on the Security of their moſt important Intereſt, viz. The eternal Salvation of their Souls. If that is ſafe and ſecure, their Joy will be full; but if it is a Matter, uncertain and precarious, *in itſelf*, becauſe it is not *effectually* provided for by God: They will fall into Dejection and inexpreſſible Perplexity. Nothing can more make the *Hearts of the righteous ſad, whom the Lord would not have made ſad*, than a Suppoſition, that their everlaſting Welfare is doubtful, in *itſelf*. Which it muſt neceſſarily be, at leaſt, if the Pardon of their Sins, if the Juſtification of their Perſons, and if their Perſeverance, in Faith, and Holineſs, depend on their own *fickle* and *corrupt* Will, without a *determining Influence*, upon it by Divine Grace. Others, who are unacquainted with the *Plague of their Hearts*, may think it is a ſufficient Ground of Peace, to have Offers of Pardon and Salvation, with Aids afforded, to facilitate obtaining a Right to them. But ſuch, who are convinced of their *Impotency*, and the *Naughtineſs* of their Hearts, can hear of Nothing more *diſmal*, than this: That their future Happineſs depends upon, the free Actings of their own Will, without being determined in its Volitions, by the good Spirit of God. Becauſe they know, that their Determination, to chuſe what is ſpiritually Good, is *only* and *entirely* the Effect of the Grace of God. I may proceed much

much farther, and affirm, that if it is Fact, that *final* Salvation, is dependent on the Will of the Saints, without an effectual Influence upon it, by Divine Grace, their future Bleſſedneſs, is a Thing impoſſible, and that they certainly know, it muſt be. Becauſe, they are ſenſible, that all Acts of Holineſs in them, are the *pure* Effects, of an efficacious Operation, of God upon them; *Who worketh in them, both to will, and to do, of His good Pleaſure.* And therefore, my Brother, fail not to examine your Doctrine, by this Rule; you may be aſſured, that no Principle, which is not calculated, to adminiſter *ſtrong* Conſolation, to regenerate Perſons, can be true; however plauſible, at firſt View, it may ſeem.

4. The fourth Rule for the Tryal of Doctrines is: *Whether they are according to Godlineſs?* No Principle can come from God, which gives Countenance to Sin. Or, which ſuppoſes, that a *lower* Degree of Obedience, is required of us now, becauſe, of our Incapacity, to yield a perfect and ſinleſs Obedience, through that Depravity, which attends us. To accommodate the Law, to our preſent Weakneſs, in its Precepts, is, as I remember, that excellent Divine Dr. *Owen*, ſomewhere ſays, ſpeaking in Relation to ſome other Things, *the worſt Kind of Antinomianiſm.* And to affirm, that we are not under the Law, as a Rule of Action

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is down-right *Libertiniſm.* That, neceſſarily implies, that no Acts are unlawful, or ſinful. For, *where no Law is, there is no Tranſgreſſion.* We are not freed from the Law, as a Rule of Conduct, nor is any Abatement made, in its preceptive Part. Neither, does the Divine Law-giver make any Allowances, for our Defects, or Imperfections, and what are ſometimes called, our *unallowed*, and *involuntary* Sins, and juſtify our Perſons, on the Ground of a *partial* Obedience, to His juſt and holy Law. My Brother, you ought ſtrictly to examine your Doctrine, by this Rule, and not advance any Principle, which is inconſiſtent with the Purity, Perfection, and extenſive Commands of the Law. For, God cannot abate of the Strictneſs of his Precepts, in order to ſave Sinners, nor juſtify their Perſons, without a Righteouſneſs, that is fully anſwerable to them, in their utmoſt Extent. As you are not to corrupt evangelical Truths; ſo you muſt maintain the Doctrine of the Law, in its Purity, and full Compaſs. If you fail of doing that, you will not *approve yourſelf to God, as a Workman that needeth not to be aſhamed*, nor, *rightly divide the Word of Truth.* †

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† Some, of late, affirm, that there is no Holineſs in Believers. Or, that they are not *new Creatures*. That they have no other Holineſs, than what is in Chriſt. Light they have,

5. The laſt Rule, whereby you ſhould try your Doctrine is: *If it be conſiſtent—Truth is one and uniform.* Contradictory Principles, cannot poſſibly be Truths. One, or other of ſuch Principles, muſt certainly be falſe. There is no Inconſiſtency in the Goſpel. It is all of a Piece. Your *Word*, or your Preaching, let it not be *yea* and *nay*; but *yea, yea. If the Trumpet gives an uncertain ſound, who ſhall prepare himſelf for the Battle?* Works and Grace, as Cauſes of Salvation, are *Oppoſites*. And, therefore, do not attribute it *partly* to Works, and *partly* to Grace; nor aſcribe it, ſometimes to one, and ſometimes to the other. There have been many, and I fear there are ſtill too many

have, by which, they ſee ſpiritual Things; but Purity they have none. The Medium, whereby, thoſe Perſons endeavour to prove their Aſſertions, is this, that we all have Sin, and commit Evil, which no holy Man, will deny, concerning himſelf. Every one who is godly, knows he hath Sin in him, as well as Holineſs, that evil Acts, as well as good ones proceed from him. By the like Medium, it might be equally proved, that Believers have no Sin. For, it is as juſt to conclude, that they have no Sin, becauſe they have Holineſs, as it is to conclude, that they have not Holineſs, becauſe they have Sin. And, that they do not commit Evil, becauſe they perform Good. This is not a Doctrine according to Godlineſs. It is calculated to perſuade us, that we may *ſee the Lord, without Holineſs*. Than which there is *Nothing, more falſe*. The Faith which they ſpeak and boaſt of, is not worth a *Fig*. It does not *work by Love. It is dead*, being *without Works*. And, it is a dreadful Deluſion, to imagine, that Salvation is connected with it. If we have not ſpiritual Purity, we have not ſpiritual Light, nor any Diſcernment of the true Nature of ſpiritual Things. *Light without Holineſs is nothing worth.*

many inconſiſtent Preachers. Sometimes the doctrinal, and applicatory Part of a Sermon, *claſh* and *diſagree*, either through the *miſtaken* Conceptions of the Preacher, relating to ſome Points, or for *Want* of a due Conſideration, in what Manner to expreſs himſelf, ſo as that his Diſcourſe, may in all Parts of it be uniform, and conſiſtent. The former, is the Effect of a wrong Judgment, the latter is a Diſcovery of a Neglect to *compare ſpiritual Things, with ſpiritual.* Let it be your Care, that neither may be found in you.

Theſe Rules are moſt plainly ſcriptural, and, therefore, infallible. No Doctrine, which eclipſes the Glory of Divine Grace: Which excludes not Boaſting: Which is not a proper Ground of *ſtrong* Conſolation, in the Saints: Which is not according to Godlineſs: Which is inconſiſtent, or agrees not with the Analogy of Faith, can be true. My Brother, carefully examine every Sentiment, by thoſe plain and eaſy Rules. You may be certain, that thoſe Principles, are Divine Truths, which agree with them, and, that thoſe which do not, are Errors, let who will embrace, and defend them. If Men would but try their Notions, by thoſe Rules, and be determined, in their Opinions, by them, which we all ought to be, they could never *peſter* the Church with pernicious Doctrines, which many have done, to the Diſhonour of

God, and the inexpreſſible Grief of pious Souls. I hope, that you will never be guilty of acting ſuch a Part, through Inattention to this neceſſary Duty. Which, I beg Leave, moſt earneſtly to recommend, and preſs upon you. By no Means fail of cloſely attending to it. And never be aſhamed of, nor afraid to preach Doctrines, which are capable of being proved true, by thoſe Divine Rules; though many may object to them. The Goſpel always had, and we muſt expect it will have, numerous Oppoſers: So long as the human Mind remains *carnal*. For, that will eternally eſteem the Things of the Spirit of God *Fooliſhneſs*, and ſuch, as ought to be rejected, by *every wiſe Man*.

VI. *Continue in them.* It is the Duty of a Miniſter to abide, in the Miniſtry, into which he is put by Jeſus Chriſt. No lucrative Views, or temporal Advantages, ought to induce him, to deſert that moſt important Service. Nor ſhould Diſcouragements, which he may meet with, therein, cauſe him to quit it. Neither, ſhould he think of diſcontinuing, in that Station, unto which he is called, by the Head of the Church, becauſe of thoſe Oppoſitions, which the Enemies of the Goſpel, make againſt him, in his Work. He ought to *endure Hardneſs, as a good Soldier of Jeſus Chriſt.* No Man can juſtify himſelf, in leaving a Service,

vice, unto which, he hath Reaſon to think, that he was called of God, either for Profit, or on Account of Difficulties, which ariſe to him, in his Attendance unto it. Having *put his Hand to the Plough*, no *enticing* Allurements, or *formidable* Oppoſitions, ſhould prevail with him to *look back*. And, my Brother, as you are to abide in this honourable Vocation, ſo, you muſt continue, conſcientouſly, and diligently, to attend unto the Duties of it. You muſt not grow weary of a *painful* and *cloſe* Study of the Holy Scriptures, and the Doctrines, therein, contained, although it is a *Wearineſs to the Fleſh*, and it may impair your natural Strength. Pray, that you may be enabled, by Divine Grace, to perſevere, in the Practice of thoſe Duties, which are enjoyned on you, in your miniſterial Character. That you may meditate in a proper Manner, on the Things of God. That you may give yourſelf wholly to them. That your Heart may be fixed on them, and your Joy and Delight be in them. That you may be influenced to take Heed to yourſelf, as a Chriſtian, and as a Miniſter. That you may be aſſiſted, to take Heed to your Doctrine, and ſtrictly try it, by thoſe infallible Rules, which I have mentioned, and which are ſo plainly Scriptural. To this End, that your Proficiency, in the Knowledge of ſacred Things, may appear to all Sorts of

Perſons, both to the Friends, and Adverſaries of Truth. And alſo, in every Article of the Chriſtian Faith. Unleſs you ſo do, you can't reaſonably hope, to be *a Workman, that needeth not to be aſhamed.* Nor expect, that happy Effect to follow, which is propoſed to our Conſideration, as Miniſters, in order to quicken us unto Diligence and Care, in our important Work. That is,

VII. *In doing this thou ſhalt both ſave thyſelf, and them, that hear thee.* A very animating Conſideration indeed! What, that is more important, and ſtriking can be urged, to engage us to Diligence, Care, and Perſeverance in our Work, as Miniſters? Our own ſpiritual Welfare, and that of others, who attend on our Miniſtry, under the Bleſſing of God, it ſeems, will be promoted, thereby. Your due Attendance to the ſeveral Branches of Advice, given in the Text, will be conducive, to the Preſervation of yourſelf, and your Hearers, from embracing Principles, which are diſhonourable to God, deſtructive of the Conſolation of the Saints, and are likely to have an ill Influence, on the Morals of Men. And, therefore, be diligent, in your Studies, in order to increaſe your Acquaintance, with thoſe Doctrines which it is your Duty to preach, unto Ends ſo ſalutary and important. We cannot be engaged in a more noble Service, than the Propagation of evangelical Truths, the Eſtabliſhment

bliſhment of the Faith, of the Saints, and the Promoting of Holineſs, in them. Shall we then think any Labour too great, to anſwer Purpoſes, of ſuch vaſt Moment? Surely we cannot.

Beſides, as the Goſpel is *the Power of God to the Salvation of them that believe*, and, that *Faith cometh by Hearing*, wherewith, Salvation, is inſeperably connected: No Conſideration, more weighty, can be thought of, to excite us, unto Care and Aſſiduity, in our miniſterial Function. Let us never grow weary of *intenſe* Study, and *laborious* Preaching, ſince it is the Pleaſure of God, thereby, *to ſave them, who believe*. If we have a due Concern for the Glory of God, and the Good of immortal Souls, nothing can give us ſuch Satisfaction and Pleaſure, as being inſtrumental, in the eternal Salvation of any of thoſe, for whom, the Son of God, graciouſly condeſcended, to obey, ſuffer, and die on the Croſs. This is a Conſideration of the *moſt animating* Nature, to ſtir us up to uſe Diligence in our *Work*. If we act under its Influence, we ſhall not *faint*, and *grow weary*, of the *moſt painful Labour*.

Thus, my honoured, and beloved Brother, I have attempted, briefly, to explain, the ſeveral Branches of Advice, given to you, in theſe Words. May the Lord aſſiſt you

you to practice, the important Duties, therein, recommended! And, my Deſire is, that you, and this Church, many Years hence, may have Occaſion, to look back, on the Solemnities of this Day, with the higheſt Satisfaction, and Thankfulneſs.

FINIS.

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